

## **METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR PROTECTING SURFACES OF OPTICAL COMPONENTS**

### **ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

5

The invention pertains to mechanisms for protecting surfaces of optical components of an optical inspection system. One aspect of the invention relates to a gas purge system that produces a gas stream that blocks contaminants from reaching the optical surfaces of the optical components and that transports contaminants away 10 from the optical surfaces of the optical components. Another aspect of the invention relates to a transparent cover that physically blocks contaminants from reaching the optical surfaces of the optical components. Yet another aspect of the invention relates to a combination of the gas purge system and the transparent cover.

15